



THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

SUNDAY, JANUARY 21–27

LECTIONARY 3

FIRST READING: Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10

A reading from Nehemiah.

¹All the people of Israel gathered together into the square before the Water Gate.

They told the scribe Ezra to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had given to Israel.

²Accordingly, the priest Ezra brought the law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could hear with understanding. This was on the first day of the seventh month.

³He read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law.

⁵And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up.

⁶Then Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, “Amen, Amen,” lifting up their hands. Then they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

⁸So they read from the book, from the law of God, with interpretation. They gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.

⁹And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, “This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep.” For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law.

¹⁰Then he said to them, “Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions of them to those for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy to our LORD; and do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”

The word of the Lord. or Word of God, word of life.

FIRST READING *Nehemiah = nee-eh-MY-uh Levites = LEE-vytz*

The story takes place at the celebration of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. This is why, in spite of the fact that the people weep in repentance for their sins, Ezra and Nehemiah urge the people to rejoice rather than mourn. The reading should reflect this. In preparation, the reader will want to develop a clear picture of the scene and then paint it in sound for the hearer.

PSALMODY: Psalm 19

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a

A reading from First Corinthians.

¹²For just as the body is one and has many members,
and all the members of the body, though many, are one body,
so it is with Christ.

¹³For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—
Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—
and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

¹⁴Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many.

¹⁵If the foot would say,
“Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,”
that would not make it any less a part of the body.

¹⁶And if the ear would say,
“Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,”
that would not make it any less a part of the body.

¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be?
If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?

¹⁸But as it is, God arranged the members in the body,
each one of them, as he chose.

¹⁹If all were a single member, where would the body be?

²⁰As it is, there are many members, yet one body.

²¹The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,”
nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.”

²²On the contrary,
the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable,
²³and those members of the body that we think less honorable
we clothe with greater honor,
and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect;
²⁴whereas our more respectable members do not need this.

But God has so arranged the body,
giving the greater honor to the inferior member,
²⁵that there may be no dissension within the body,
but the members may have the same care for one another.

²⁶If one member suffers, all suffer together with it;
if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

SECOND READING

Take heed—this is a tough one! Not only is the reading long, but St. Paul makes his point regarding community in Christ several times over. The reading requires an energetic delivery and demands that the reader be very clearly aware of the direction in which each sentence is heading. Practice repeatedly!

²⁷Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.
²⁸And God has appointed in the church first apostles,
second prophets, third teachers;
then deeds of power, then gifts of healing,
forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues.
²⁹Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers?
Do all work miracles? ³⁰Do all possess gifts of healing?
Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?
³¹But strive for the greater gifts.

The word of the Lord. *or* Word of God, word of life.

GOSPEL: Luke 4:14-21

The holy gospel according to Luke.

¹⁴Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee,
and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country.
¹⁵He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

¹⁶When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up,
he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom.
He stood up to read, ¹⁷and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him.
He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

¹⁸“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

²⁰And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down.
The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.

²¹Then he began to say to them,
“Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

The gospel of the Lord.

GOSPEL *synagogue = SIN-uh-gog*

This text abounds with pause possibilities. Explore the places where pauses help to build the tension: (1) between verses 15 and 16; (2) after “as was his custom”; (3) after “where it is written”; (4) after verse 19; (5) after verse 20a; (6) after verse 21a. Exploit them. Allow the story to come to life in the imagination of the hearer.